

TARAWA



2d MARINES

KEEP MOVING

OPERATION: GALVANIC

THE BATTLE FOR TARAWA ATOLL

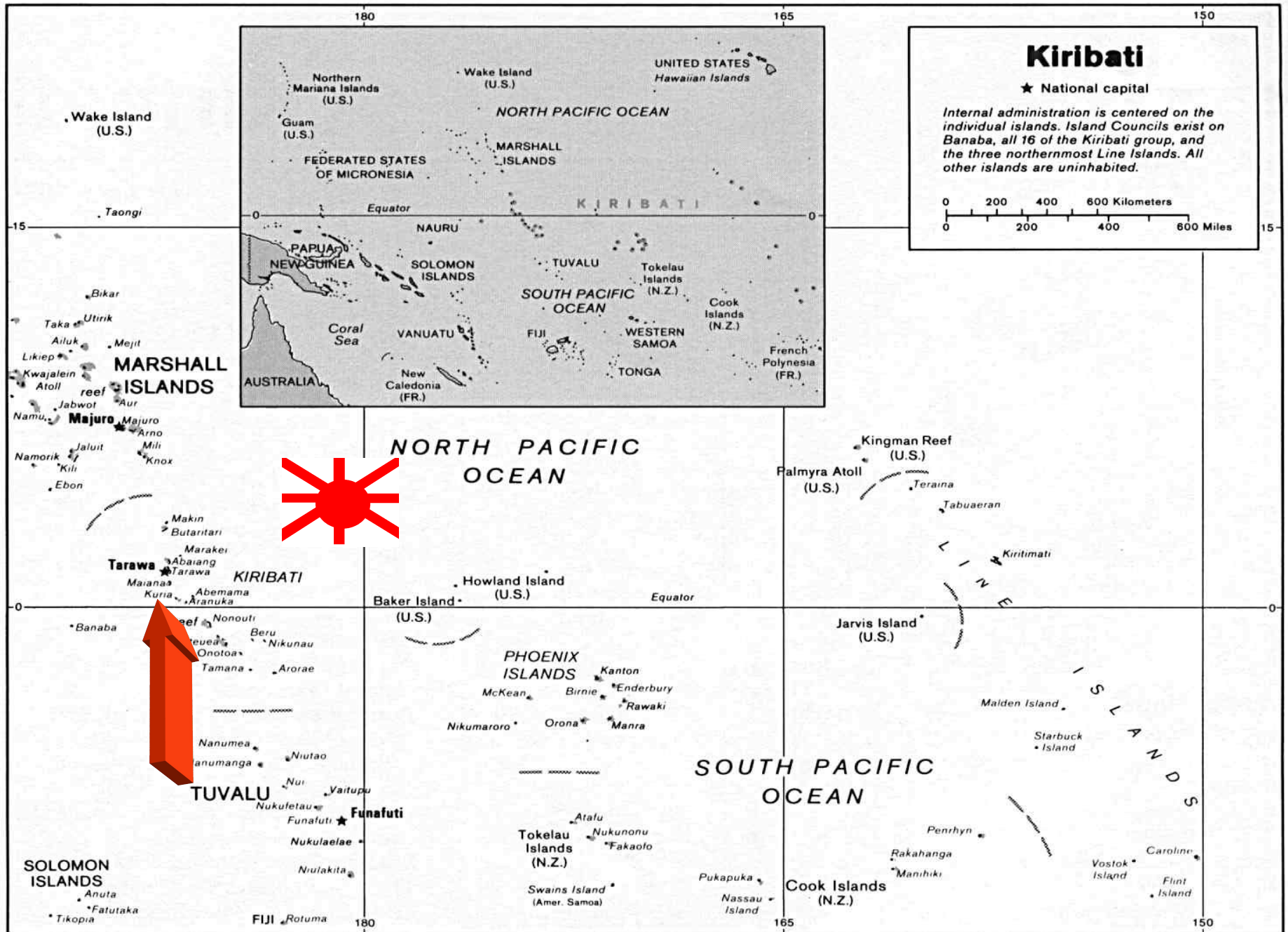


OPERATION: GALVANIC

- **BETIO ISLAND**

- **WHERE IS IT ?**

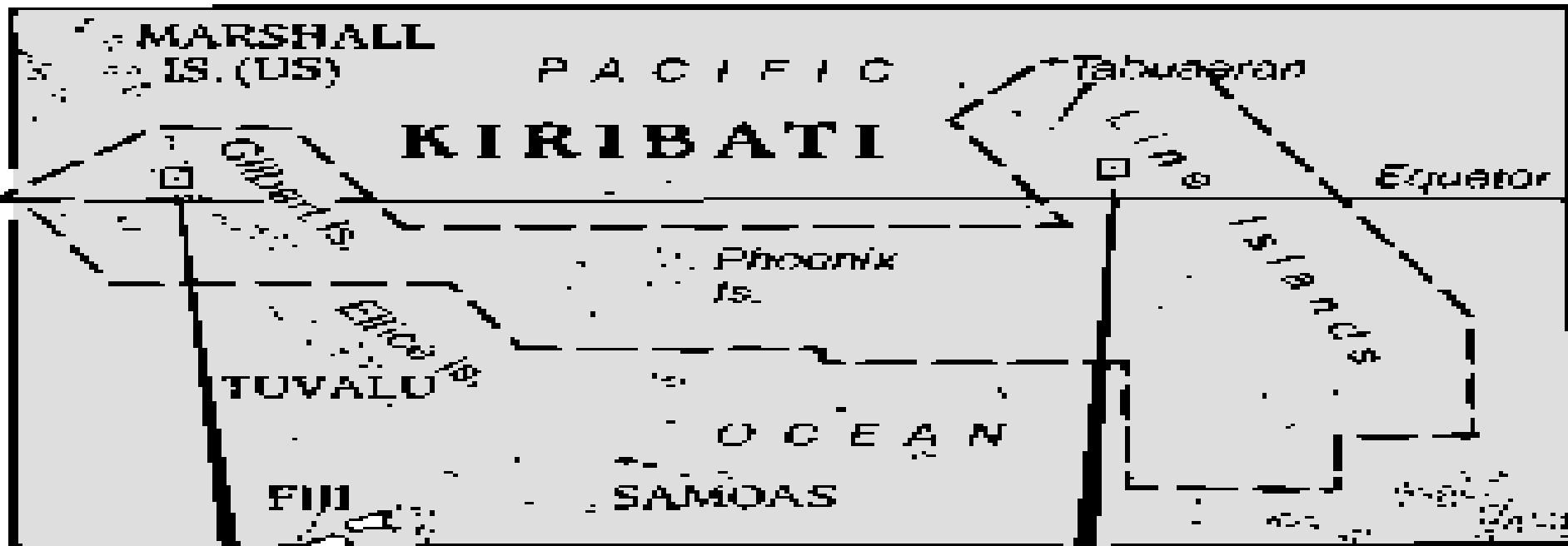
- TARAWA ATOLL
- GILBERT ISLAND CHAIN
- EASTERN MICRONESIA
- CENTRAL PACIFIC



3000km

1500m/s

For location please see
'Pacific' section at the
front of the book



DAB-M127



□ international airport

WHY ATTACK TARAWA?

- **SIZE??**
- **JAPANESE AIRFIELD ON BETIO**
- **UNREMARKABLE FIELD BUT-**
- **WHOEVER CONTROLLED IT
CONTROLLED SEALANES OF S.
PACIFIC AND APPROACH TO
MARSHALL ISLANDS**

HISTORY OF ISLAND

- **FIRST EXPLORED 1842**
- **BECAME A BRITISH CROWN COLONY**
- **JAPANESE TOOK CONTROL OF GILBERTS DAY AFTER PEARL HARBOR**

Significance of Tarawa

- **Prior to August 1942 - tiny garrison**
- **17 AUG 1942 - 2d Marine Raider BN**
 - Attacked Makin Island (100mi North of Atoll)
- **Japanese realized the strategic importance of Tarawa, especially Betio**
- **AUG 1943 - Betio transformed into a fortress**

PLANNING PROBLEMS

- **LITTLE KNOWN ABOUT GILBERTS**
- **INTELLIGENCE WAS OUTDATED AND INACCURATE**
- **A FEW NEW ZEALANDERS LIVED THERE PRIOR TO PEARL HARBOR**
- **FIRST LANDING AGAINST CORAL ATOLL**
- **CHARTS FROM 1841 EXPEDITION**
- **1901 TIDAL OBSERVATIONS**

NAVY LEADERS - GALVANIC

- **VADM RAYMOND SPRUANCE-
CENPACCOM**
- **RADM RICHMOND KELLY “TERRIBLE”
TURNER**
 - CO TASK FORCE 52 - CATF (NORTHERN
STRIKE FORCE - MAKIN)
- **RADM HARRY W. “HANDSOME HARRY”
HILL**
 - CO TASK FORCE 53 - CATF (SOUTHERN
STRIKE FORCE - BETIO)

GILBERTS FORCE

- **1 MARINE DIVISION**
 - 2d MARDIV
 - ASSAULT FORCE:
 - 2ND MARINES AND 2/8
 - RESERVE
 - 1/8, 3/8 AND 6TH MARINES
- **1 ARMY DIVISION**
 - Army 165th Regimental Combat Team of 27th Infantry Division

Army Leaders and Their Role

- **Not particularly significant**
- **Required four days to take Makin Island - Fairly pathetic effort.**

MARINE LEADERS- GALVANIC

- **MAJGEN HOLLAND M. SMITH**
 - COMMANDER V AMPHIBIOUS CORPS
- **MAJGEN JULIAN C. SMITH**
 - CG 2d MAR DIV - CLF
- **COL DAVID M. SHOUP**
 - 2d MARINES REGIMENTAL CO
 - AWARDED MOH FOR EFFORTS ON BETIO
 - 22d Commandant of the Marine Corps

JAPANESE FORCES

- **RIKUSENTAI-JAPANESE NAVAL INFANTRY SPECIAL LANDING FORCE**
- **SOME CALLED THEM “JUST A BUNCH OF DAMNED SAILORS”**
- **REALITY-IMPERIAL MARINES-TOJO’S BEST**

JAPANESE LEADERS

- **ADM MASASHI KOBAYASHI**
 - COMMANDER OF JAPANESE 4TH FLEET
- **CDR KEISUKE MATSUO**
 - CO SPECIAL NAVAL LANDING FORCE
- **RADM KEYI SHIBASAKI**
 - COMMANDER of 3RD -SPECIAL BASE FORCE
 - COMMANDER AT TARAWA

JAPANESE STRATEGIES

- **AT BETIO-WANTED DEFEND FROM SHORELINE INLAND**
- **USED MOUNTED, TANK AND INFANTRY GUNS TO SHOOT LANDING CRAFT**
- **NOT GUADALCANAL**
- **SHIBASAKI BOASTS “ONE MILLION AMERICANS...ONE HUNDRED YEARS”**

MOVEMENT TO CONTACT

- **2D MARDIV BENEFITED FROM
NEW GEAR**
- **M-1 RIFLES, BAR(s), .50 CAL,
75 MM PACK HOWITZER**
- **NEW CAMO UTILITIES**
- **RUBBER BOATS AND LVT-2'S**

NEW REGIMENT

- **COMBAT ENGINEERS**
- **COMMANDERS WEREN'T SURE HOW TO USE THEM**
- **WOULD BE INVALUABLE ON BUNKERS AT TARAWA**
- **MOH AWARDEES 2 of 4**
 - 1stLt Bonnyman
 - SSgt Bordelon



JAPANESE BEEF UP DEFENSES

- **OVER 3,000 MINES SET UP**
- **OVER 300 MACHINE GUNS AND ARTILLERY PIECES**
- **LOG SEA WALL**
- **CONCRETE TETRAHEDRONS**
- **CONCRETE, SAND, LOG BUNKERS**



DEFENSES (CONTINUED)

- **HEAVY HOWITZERS AND MACHINE GUNS WITH TIGHT FIELDS OF FIRE**
 - SET UP ON FLAT TERRAIN
 - LED TO CHANNELING
- **TARAWA ONLY THREE MILES BY 800 METERS AT WIDEST POINT!**

ASSAULT ON TARAWA

- **BIGGEST PROBLEM: CORAL REEF AROUND BETIO**
- **SHOUP AND MARINES WOULD ATTACK FROM LESSER PROTECTED NORTH SIDE**
- **HAD TO CROSS REEF 600-1000 YDS. FROM SHORE**



ASSAULT (CONTINUED)

- **LANDING CRAFT NEEDED FOUR FEET OR MORE TO CROSS REEF**
- **FIRST THREE WAVES OF LVTS HAD ENOUGH WATER TO CROSS**
- **REMAINING WAVES CAUGHT ON REEF-NEAP TIDE.**
- **Maj Frank Holland (New Zealand)
There won't be three feet of water on the reef**
- **HAD TO WADE 1/2 MILE IN CHEST DEEP WATER TO SHORE**



NUMBERS

- **AMPHIBIOUS DOCTRINE SAID
NEEDED 3:1 ODDS**
- **MARINES HAD 1.66:1**
- **ONLY LANDING THE ASSAULT
ELEMENTS OF TWO RGTS - 6,268**
- **JAPANESE DEFENDERS
NUMBERED 4,601**



PROBLEMS

- **EDSON WANTED TO INVADE NEIGHBORING ISLANDS PRE-BETIO TO SERVE AS ARTY PLATFORMS. IT WAS DENIED**
- **INSTEAD GOT 3 HOURS OF NGFS AND SIX DAYS OF B-24 STRIKES**
- **LARGEST COMBINED BOMBARDMENT IN US HISTORY**

OOPS!

- **NGFS INEFFECTIVE**
 - TRAJECTORY TOO SHALLOW;
RICOCHETED OFF CORAL
- **BUNKER CONSTRUCTION TOO TOUGH**
- **AIR SUPPORT WITHDRAWN TOO EARLY**
- **NGFS WITHDRAWN EARLY**



ACTUAL LANDING

- **MARINES CONDUCTED GUNWALE-GUNWALE TRANSFER FROM HIGGINS BOATS TO LVT'S FOR ASSAULT**
- **H-HOUR AT 0830-PUSHED BACK TO 0845 THEN 0900**
- **NGFS STOPPED AT 0855-MEANT BOATS HAD TO TRAVEL MOST VULNERABLE LAST 1500 YARDS UNCOVERED**

REEF TROUBLE

- **LVT-1'S AND 2'S HIT REEF**
- **USE THEIR TRACKS TO CROSS**
- **CARRIED FIRST FOUR WAVES TO SHORE-LOVE 3/2 IN WAVE FOUR**
- **NEAP TIDE PREVENTED REST FROM CROSSING**
- **WAVE FIVE CONTAINED ALL BLT COs**





REAR ADMIRAL JAMES H. HARRIS, U.S.N., COMMANDING U.S.S. ALBATROSS (SS-211), AT SEA.

U.S. NAVY PHOTOGRAPHIC SERVICE

BREAKDOWN OF BETIO

- **BETIO BROKEN DOWN INTO RED 1, RED 2, RED 3, AND GREEN**
- **RED 1/GREEN-3/2**
- **RED 2-2/2**
- **RED 3-2/8**

“SQUAD LEADERS’ BATTLE”

- **COL SHOUP, MAJ MIKE RYAN
AND MAJ JIM CROWE LONE
SENIOR OFFICERS**
- **REMAINING LEADERSHIP FROM
JUNIOR OFFICERS AND SQUAD
LEADERS**
- **UNORGANIZED CLUMPS DID
FIGHTING**

“SITUATION IN DOUBT”

- **FIRST THREE WAVES HUDDLED BEHIND SEA WALL**
- **SHOUP TAKES STOCK-70% CASUALTIES**
- **NO COMM WITH COMMAND SHIP. 3/2 CO MAJ JOHN SCHOETTEL HAD NO COMM WITH LINE CO.S**
- **INDIVIDUAL GROUPS CARRIED BATTLE**
- **LOVE CO 3/2 TANK ATTACHMENTS FACILITATED LANDING ON RED 1.**

TOUCH AND GO

- **REINFORCEMENTS TRIED TO LAND MORNING OF D+1**
- **TIDE EVEN LOWER-
REINFORCEMENTS
SLAUGHTERED IN CROSSFIRE**

NIGHT MOVES

- **NIGHT OF D+1 MIKE EDSON COMES ASHORE AND TAKES OVER**
 - SHOUP WOUNDED CONTINUES TO COMMAND REINFORCED BLT
- **LAUNCHES MASSIVE COUNTERATTACK D+2**
 - 1/6 BLT LANDED ON SW CORNER
- **JAPANESE RETALIATE THAT NIGHT- REPULSED HAND TO HAND**



VICTORY

- **LAST ATTACK BREAKS JAPANESE'S BACK**
- **MORNING OF D+3 MARINES VICTORIOUS**

CASUALTIES

- **MARINES:**
 - 1009 DEAD
 - 2101 WOUNDED
 - 3110 TOTAL CASUALTIES
- **JAPANESE**
 - ALL BUT 146 DEAD
 - ONLY 4 JAPANESE MARINES SURVIVED
- **MOST SURVIVORS WERE WORKERS**
 - Many of the workers were Koreans

RESULTS

- **FIRST USE OF LVT-2'S**
 - 90 of 125 used in the assault were destroyed
- **HELPED IRON OUT AMPHIBIOUS DOCTRINE-ESPECIALLY DEALING WITH NGFS AND ATOLLS**
- **SHOWED RESOLVE OF JAPANESE, WORTH OF MARINES OVER ARMY**
- **NEED FOR AMPHIBIOUS ASSAULT COMMAND SHIPS**

INDIVIDUAL COURAGE

- **LT SANDY BONNYMAN**
- **LT DEANE HAWKINS**
- **COL DAVID M. SHOUP**
- **SSGT WILLIAM BORDELON**
- **MAJ MIKE RYAN**
- **TOTAL OF 499 AWARDS FOR VALOR GIVEN**